

**METHOD AND APPARATUS FOR SELECTIVELY READING COUNTER
INFORMATION IN A NETWORK DEVICE**

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ABSTRACT

Ripeness indicators are provided and associated with statistics counters to enable the counters to be read once sufficient data has accumulated in the counters. The ripeness indicators may be used to signal to the network device when one or more counters has met or exceeded a predetermined value, such as 50%. Monitoring ripeness indicators associated with the counters enables the network device to harvest counters when they are sufficiently full to gather meaningful statistics from the counters, while ignoring counters that do not contain sufficient data or are not in danger of overflowing. This enables the network device to devote less resources to statistics gathering since high volume counters may be harvested more frequently than low volume counters. The ripeness indicators may be provided with individual counters, groups of counters, or accounts containing individual and/or groups of counters.

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